

2680559

Registered provider: New Path Residential Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately operated and provides care for up to four children. The home offers therapeutic care to children with complex behavioural and social care needs.

There were four children living at the home at the time of the inspection.

There is currently no registered manager in post. The previous registered manager left in January 2025.

Inspection dates: 30 April and 1 May 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 23 April 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/04/2024	Full	Good
03/04/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
09/01/2023	Full	Good
12/10/2022	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Two children have lived in the home for over two years. The two children who have moved on from the home since the last inspection were supported to move on in a planned way. One moved closer to their family, and another moved to another setting where they could continue to develop their independence skills. This child had built positive relationships with staff and continues to keep in touch.

Children moving into the home are encouraged to visit first. They spend time with the staff and children. This helps staff to understand their needs better and helps to reduce children's anxieties. Leaders and managers assess the needs of the children moving in and how well they are able to meet their needs. These assessments take into consideration the likely dynamics between children.

The home is a welcoming environment. There is a family style atmosphere with children's photographs and artwork on display. Children said that they like living in the home. They like their personalised bedrooms and enjoy having pet cats live with them. They feel listened to and know how to share their views or raise any concerns. One child said, 'I love living here, I think it is perfect; I really like living here.'

Leaders, managers and staff treat the children with compassion and empathy. Staff know the children well and help them to safely navigate day-to-day challenges. The children have the opportunity to access external help through the therapeutic support package on offer. This includes regular direct support, such as play therapy, counselling and help with mental health and substance misuse. This therapeutic support helps children to begin to cope with their experiences, the impact of trauma and to develop skills to manage and express their emotions and needs.

Staff encourage the children to do well in education. They encourage the children to take part in structured educational activities that are tailored to their individual needs. The staff work with partner professionals to ensure that children who are unable to attend full-time education receive positive experiences of alternative education in the home and community. The staff support the children to set themselves goals for their futures and explore career options. The staff have helped to reintegrate one child into school. This child's social worker described how, as a result, the child is now studying for their exams and aspires to become a criminal psychologist.

Children are encouraged to discover interests and develop their skills. This helps to bring a sense of enjoyment and fun. They take part in activities that help them to develop new skills. They enjoy cooking, baking, art and going to the gym. They are encouraged to develop independence and self-care skills, such as doing their laundry and keeping their bedroom clean.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Managers work closely with children's social workers to help keep children safe. This includes developing and reviewing individualised safety plans. These plans detail relevant background information and provide strategies to guide staff on how to respond when children are, at times, at extremely high risk of harm.

Social workers said that leaders and managers are proactive and advocate well for children. One said that staff manage risks well. Another said, 'I cannot fault the home' and described the 'love and support' that staff offer the child. They said that despite the worries about and continuing risks face by the child that the staff managed this well. They said that they, 'Definitely' did not have any concerns in the way staff respond to risks'. This social worker said that staff manage difficult situations as well as possible and communicate well with them.

Leaders and managers take effective action when any allegations or concerns are raised. This includes involving the correct professionals to ensure external oversight and appropriate responses that inform future practice. This helps to safeguard children and ensure that their views are heard and taken seriously.

When children go missing, staff respond quickly to locate them and support their safe return. Children are welcomed back into the home and supported to talk about what happened. Children often share their views with staff. This is because staff form established relationships that help them to assess and respond to children's safety needs and reduce the likelihood of children going missing from home.

Physical restraint is only used as a last resort. When it has been used, it has been a proportionate response to keep children and staff safe. Leaders and managers reflect on practice to minimise the use of restraint. However, children and staff have not consistently received suitable opportunities to reflect specifically on incidents in suitable timescales.

There are monitoring systems used, including CCTV and substance detection animals. The use of these systems is not regularly reviewed by managers to ensure that they are necessary and proportionate to children's current risks. These arrangements can be intrusive and take away from the homeliness of children's day-to-day experiences.

Safer recruitment practices are generally followed in respect of staff recruitment to help ensure that staff are safe to work with children. However, when individuals have previously worked in roles relevant to the care of children or vulnerable adults, managers have not always taken all steps to assure themselves of the reason for staff leaving these roles. This means that information which has the potential to impact on suitability may not be identified.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There have been recent changes to the management in the home. The deputy manager stepped into the position of manager when the previous manager left. She has applied to register and is working toward her level 5 qualification. Staff are receptive to recent changes in managers, and say that they feel positively about the current leadership of the home.

Staff said that they value the support and guidance offered to them by leaders. They are able to access appropriate support from managers in a formal and ad-hoc manner.

Leaders and managers are child focused, caring and committed to providing a good quality of care. They have a good understanding of children's needs and are present in the home, encouraging a positive and settled environment for children and staff. They take pride in the trusting relationships they have built with children, staff and external professionals who visit the children regularly to offer support.

Managers have systems in place to regularly reflect on incidents and identify what they could do differently. The manager has introduced weekly monitoring of the therapeutic care and progress of the children. The responsible individual is involved in regularly reviewing the effectiveness of support for the children. There have been examples of some occasions when practice has fallen below expected standards. When this has occurred, managers have quickly explored and responded to these concerns. This reflection and action help to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

Staff undertake a range of online and face-to-face training. This includes in-house workshops and external training. It is a mixture of core and specialist training that is relevant to their role and helps them to meet the children's needs. When gaps in staff knowledge are identified, internal and external training are sought to ensure that staff have an up-to-date knowledge to provide support to children with complex needs. New staff members benefit from an induction that helps them to settle into their role and learn the required skills.

There are examples of child-centred recording that capture the child's voice, as well as meaningful conversations with children. However, the quality of recording is variable. Some recordings are subjective and others are difficult to follow. Sometimes, language such as 'violent', 'dysregulated' and 'heightened' is used. This could be experienced by children when reading their records as stigmatising. This is not in line with the therapeutic ethos outlined in the statement of purpose.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that any child who has been restrained is given the opportunity to express their feelings about their experience of the restraint as soon as is practicable, ideally within 24 hours of the restraint incident, taking the age of the child and the circumstances of the restraint into account. In some cases, children may need longer to work through their feelings, so a record that the child has talked about their feelings should be made no longer than five days after the incident of restraint (regulation 35(3)(c)). ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards' page 49, paragraph 9.60)
- The registered person should ensure that as set out in regulations 31-33, they maintain good employment practice that safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards' page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- The registered person should ensure that any home using CCTV or other monitoring arrangements, such as the use of sniffer dogs, is known, is proportionate and that this use is kept under review. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards' page 16, paragraph 3.16)
- The registered person should ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. They should avoid using potentially stigmatising language and use child-focused language consistently in records. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to The Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2680559

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: New Path Residential Limited

Registered provider address: 475 Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 6NJ

Responsible individual: Saima Raja

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Carrie Twinn, Social Care Inspector

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